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COUNTRY USSR and Austria (Soviet Zone)

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SUBJECT 1. Listening to VOA  
2. Suggestions for Propaganda to Induce Defections

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SOURCE 1. The first time I heard of VOA was 

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One of the kolkhozniki had a radio set which was one of the three or four sets on the kolkhoz. One day this man, who worked in the same brigade as I, mentioned that he had heard a radio broadcast in Russian from the United States. This evoked considerable interest among the other kolkhozniki, who asked him about the content of the program. This man then related that the VOA broadcast described life on a typical Soviet kolkhoz, including the long hours of work, the meager payments for work days, the unavailability of consumer goods, and the generally low standard of living. All the kolkhozniki present were amazed, and they marvelled at the accuracy of the VOA description of kolkhoz life and wondered how the Americans had obtained such a true picture. Considerable discussion of VOA followed. Since VOA's description of the kolkhoz was so accurate, the kolkhozniki concluded that other news broadcasts by the VOA, although covering topics beyond their scope of knowledge, must also be true. Each morning thereafter the members of this brigade eagerly awaited this one kolkhoznik who brought them additional news of VOA broadcasts. This continued for about six or seven days, and each day saw a discussion of the VOA, of living conditions in the Soviet Union, and of the relative accuracy of the VOA and the Soviet press. After about a week the kolkhoznik who listened to the VOA was ordered to appear before the Slout selsovet. We later found out that when he arrived at the Slout selsovet, he was confronted by several NKVD officials from Glukhov, the rayon center. He was accused of listening to VOA broadcasts and passing on their content to other people. Unaware that he had done anything illegal, the man admitted the truth of the charges. The NKVD officials threatened to confiscate his radio but relented when he promised not to listen any more. Upon his return to the kolkhoz and upon being asked about VOA broadcasts the next morning, this man dismissed all questions about VOA broadcasts with a curt statement that he no longer listened and was not interested.

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When the other kolkhozniki learned that he had been reprimanded for listening to VOA broadcasts, it was convincing proof to them that these broadcasts were true and that the Soviets feared them. Another factor which contributed to their conviction that the broadcasts were true, was the great extent to which they were jammed.

2.

in Austria I was asked by a lieutenant whether I would like to become a telephone operator or a radio operator. Upon replying that I would like to become a telephone operator, this lieutenant told me that as a radio operator I would learn much more and become better acquainted with world events. Although I did not know it at that time, I later understood that he was referring to foreign broadcasts which would become the source of my education. After I became [redacted] and became acquainted [redacted], they told me about VOA broadcasts but cautioned me to be careful with whom I discussed them. I learned that practically every radio operator listened to foreign broadcasts because they had ample opportunity to do so without fear of being detected.

3. In April 1951, with considerable trepidation, I turned in on a VOA broadcast for the first time. After that I became a regular listener to VOA broadcasts. I discussed VOA broadcasts with friends whom I knew I could trust. I also discussed these programs with other soldiers but was always careful to conceal the fact that I was actually listening to them. I usually started the conversation by mentioning that, "a fellow who listened to VOA last year" told me about some of the programs. In this way if I was called in by an officer and accused of listening to VOA broadcasts, I would just say that I heard it from some soldier long ago. One of the most convincing factors of VOA broadcasts was the accurate portrayal of kolkhoz life; just as the kolkhozniki, most of the soldiers felt that since the VOA described kolkhoz life so accurately, its other broadcasts must likewise be true.
4. The radio on which I listened to VOA broadcasts was the Soviet military radio RBM-1 (I did not know what these letters stood for). I do not know on what meter band I listened to the broadcasts, because the radio had a limited range (fiksirovanny volny). The only place I could listen was somewhere on the dial beyond 200 (the dial was marked from 60 to 200). I usually listened from 2215 to 2245 hours and several times from 0200 to 0500 hours, both at Austrian time. Reception was best from 0300 to 0500 hours, when there was almost no jamming. From 2215 to 2245 hours jamming was quite heavy, but the broadcasts were still understandable. From my experiences as a radio operator, I would say reception was best in humid or damp weather and poorest in dry weather.
5. I cannot say whether any EM other than the radio operators listened to foreign radio broadcasts. I heard rumors that most officers, when they had the opportunity, tried to listen to foreign broadcasts. I can recall one time when my CO asked me to repair a radio and requested that I complete the work by that same evening because he wanted to listen to Radio Moscow. He and I both knew that he was not interested in hearing Radio Moscow but VOA.
6. Judging from my conversations with numerous Soviet soldiers, I believe that they would like to hear the following types of programs:
  - a. Programs discrediting the Zampolit's stories about treatment afforded Soviet defectors. This is most important. These stories claim defectors are given shabby treatment, are returned to the

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Soviets in exchange for western soldiers, or are shot after all their information has been obtained. Lately the story was that Americans sent Soviet defectors to special schools where they were trained as spies to be returned eventually to the USSR to carry on espionage and sabotage. I believe that it is particularly important to dispute these charges of sabotage training because some soldiers who might defect would not care to return to the USSR as spies.

- b. Programs saying it is possible for a defector to start a new life in the West. Broadcasts by recent defectors who have found employment and have become established in the West would be particularly convincing in this respect.
  - c. Programs comparing the Soviet and western (particularly American) standards of living. I feel these would make Soviet soldiers think about their own poor life in the USSR and arouse in them a desire to establish a similarly good life for themselves.
  - d. Programs of news about the international situation, which was always of interest to Soviet soldiers who at least partially doubted the news given out by the Soviet press.
7. In my opinion news concerning former defectors entering the US Army should not be given too much publicity. Most Soviets who might defect would not look too charitably upon prospects of doing service in another army, even the US Army with its privileges and freedoms. Others might interpret such publicity as indication of a general US policy to impress Soviet defectors into the US Army.

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